

INTELLIGENCE DISSEMINATION AMONG LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL  
LAW ENFORCEMENT: THE NECESSITY, GAPS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how intelligence is gathered in the Southern State Region, identify perceived gaps in the current policies used with this communication and offer potential solutions to intelligence communication flaws. An interview-based research of Southern State Region officers and agents and the support of peer-reviewed academic articles shaped the research in this paper. The results of this research indicated that (a) personal connections between law enforcement agents and federal agents are the backbone of the current process utilized in information sharing, (b) there are gaps when personnel leave their position in office because of the personal connections that are used while in office, and (c) the fusion center in the Southern State Region is a highly underutilized because of its lack of publicity and resources. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iiii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study.....	2
Statement of Problem.....	4
Purpose of Study.....	4
Limitations and Assumptions.....	5
Definition of Key Terms.....	6
Summary.....	7
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Pre 9/11 Shortcomings in Information Sharing.....	11
Post 9/11 Changes in Information Sharing.....	12
Fusion Center Formation and Its Impact on Intelligence Sharing Nationwide....	14
The Need for Information Sharing to Ensure National Security, How It Is Orchestrated, and Challenges Faces.....	17
Summary.....	20
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology.....	23
Introduction.....	23

Population and Sample.....	23
Data Collection and Instrumentation.....	25
Data Analysis.....	26
Summary.....	28
Chapter 4: Analysis of Data.....	29
Introduction.....	29
Organization of Data Analysis.....	29
Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents.....	30
Table 1.....	31
Analysis of Data.....	31
Many Law Enforcement Departments are overwhelmed with Information and Lack Knowledge of Available Resources.....	35
Different Systems used throughout Law Enforcement Departments cause a Technological Issue.....	36
Slow Process of Declassification and “Need-to-Know” hinder Communication Process.....	37
Summary.....	38
Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusions and Implications.....	39
Introduction.....	39
Conclusions.....	39

Implications for Future Research.....	43
Implications for Practice.....	44
Summary.....	46
REFERENCES.....	48
APPENDIX A: Recruitment Script.....	53
APPENDIX B: Local Interview Questions.....	54
APPENDIX C: State and Federal Interview Questions.....	55

**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**  
**INTRODUCTION**

Prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001, the philosophy of intelligence dissemination in the law enforcement community focused primarily on “operations security,” in which intelligence information and records were not widely distributed throughout law enforcement departments and federal agencies in order to prevent information from being compromised. This preventative technique hindered communication among law enforcement agencies and potentially jeopardized missions throughout the country (Carter, 2009). September 11, 2001, was a breakpoint for American protective agencies causing them to realize law enforcement communication was less effective than terrorist communications (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). After September 11, 2001, practices of sharing information among federal agencies and law enforcement departments began to change as the flaws of the “operations security” tactic, or the actual operations, became evident. The general perspective on information sharing has shifted to facilitate involving more people who know the information at hand; therefore, the change in information sharing makes a plan to prevent attacks and threats from reaching execution easier (Carter, 2009).

Despite the continuous changes in information sharing among organizations,



many imperfections still exist when sharing intelligence among different levels of law enforcement. The prevailing communication technique throughout the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies is personal connections (Cozine, Joyal, & Ors, 2014). These personal connections facilitated easy dissemination of information among agents of varying organizations in real time.

The inclusion of personal connection strategies brings a number of concerns or limitations. Not every agent has established connections or has recognized that the other branches of law enforcement could potentially assist in their investigation. The federal intelligence community possesses a wealth of information to provide to local and state law enforcement offices involving “analytic tradecraft, understanding the adversary, national-level technical collection, and the like” (p. 16), which in turn can be reciprocated with local law enforcement’s “on-the-ground” intelligence that is gathered daily that federal agents lack (Jenkins, Liepman, & Willis, 2014). This collaboration is sometimes overlooked when trying to complete an investigation because the agency has too narrow of a focus

### **CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR THE STUDY**

In 1848, Karl Marx coined the social conflict theory through his writings of the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx viewed society as being comprised of individuals and groups who compete for social, political, and material resources. Some individuals and organizations are able to obtain and preserve more resources than others (OpenStax College, 2013). George Vold’s position on the conflict theory is “people are naturally group orientated and may come together to form a group to push for their particular interests in the political arena” (Pond, 1999, p. 72).

Social conflict theory encompasses barriers when communicating with outside organizations as a natural human tendency. According to Kenney (1956) the internal communication barriers to police communication include fear and suspicions, departmental status of individuals, officer attitude and behavior, etc. These barriers lead to problems in communication throughout a police department. He noted the need for communication within police departments, but also recognized the difficulty in eliminating existing barriers (Kenney, 1956).

Social conflict theory can be identified in current research displaying its influence on intelligence communication within law enforcement because resources have a tendency to maintain within its organization. Intelligence-led policing after September 11, 2001 has become a major process according to Schaible and Sheffield's research (2011). They concluded that there is an increased involvement in homeland security interactions among state and federal agencies which resulted in an increase in intelligence-led policing at all levels. However, sharing resources among levels of law enforcement has had little impact on interactions among agencies (Schaible & Sheffield, 2011). Despite these efforts to increase communication, interaction remains scarce among agencies because of the parochialism that pervades law enforcement.

Most recently, Jackson (2014) studied efforts being taken to share information, how information sharing has been evaluated, and the better ways of sharing information. Jackson focused on how the interaction among agencies occurs and the hindrances resulting from social conflict. In Jackson's conclusions, he stated there is a lack of literature evaluating information sharing in the United States since September 11, 2001 (Jackson, 2014). The need for analytic investments is important for future decisions;

therefore, the justification for the current study is present.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The current study analyzes the different techniques that were implemented in homeland security intelligence in order to increase communication among the local, state, and federal levels of law enforcement after September 11, 2001. These techniques were then used to help better understand communication impediments and remedy existing communication barriers. At the time of the study, the communication process being used to disseminate information and intelligence among these three levels lacked a fortified structure for individuals to follow (Carter, Carter, Chermak, & McGarrell, 2017). The modal platform for transferring information through organizations was personal connections and lacked the structure of an actual program to guide its information distribution (Cozine et al., 2014).

These personal communication techniques used to disseminate information at government levels allows for the different agencies and departments to connect on a straightforward basis but fail to consider some of the impediments, such as declassification, that are jeopardizing intelligence sharing among different agencies (Carter et al., 2017). Employees with different agencies are encouraged to share information through databases and connections in order to disseminate intelligence outside their own agency (Carter, 2009). However, gaps such as the lack of documented contacts in different agencies and personnel changes are not considered when relying on personal contact as a main source of gathering external intelligence.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine how intelligence is gathered in the Southern State Region, discover the perceived gaps in the current policies and practices used with this communication and provide potential solutions to intelligence communication. The main focus of communication throughout the Southern State Region is personal communication between one individual in an agency making contact and connection with an individual in another agency in order to gather information and intelligence pertinent to their investigation. These aspects are common in the Southern State Region because of the small agency sizes throughout all three levels of law enforcement and the close communication among agencies needed to better protect the Southern State Region's citizens.

The following research questions will guide the study:

- 1) How has intelligence dissemination among local, state, and federal law enforcement officers changed since September 11, 2001?
- 2) What impediments, if any, in intelligence dissemination are perceived by local, state, and federal law enforcement agents?

### **LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Generalization of the findings will be limited because only one location was used and because of the qualitative nature of the research. The findings may be less definitive, requiring the practitioners, rather than the researcher, to judge the applicability of the findings. Merriam (1998), however, argued generalization is neither a strength nor goal of qualitative research. Similarly, Patton believed the strongest argument for generalizing is extrapolation, the "modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical conditions" (1990, p. 489). Patton alleged

extrapolation is broadly accepted by both qualitative researchers and the general public.

The methodology involves a non-probability purposive sample to insure the participants will be uniquely suited for the intent of the study. A convenient sample consisted of law enforcement officers employed within the area of the research and who were available to answer questions in a reasonable timeframe. This method of sampling has two potential sources of bias. Those who were in attendance at the conference did not have an opportunity to be interviewed. Secondly, law enforcement officers who chose to be interviewed, may have done so only because they may have strong unilateral perceptions regarding intelligence dissemination among local, state, and federal law enforcement officers.

The last limitation concerns the literature review. The review may not be comprehensive which potentially impacted the manner in which the interview schedule was designed and limits the synthesis of findings with current literature. Because research on government intelligence sharing is generally restricted, the researcher was constrained to gathering non-classified data. Finally, it is assumed that the respondents were honest in their responses.

### **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

Significant terms used throughout this study are defined as follows:

**Information:** “raw data; it could be an item obtained from a newspaper report, a statement made by a confidential informant, or simply an observation made by an astute police officer during a traffic stop” (Palmieri, 2005, para 2).

**Intelligence:** “a product that consists of information that has been refined to meet

the needs of policymakers; a process through which that information is identified, collected, and analyzed” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, para 9).

**Communication:** “the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another ” (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 1).

**9/11 Commission Report:** “an independent, bipartisan commission created by congressional legislation and the signature of President George W. Bush in late 2002, is chartered to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, including preparedness for and the immediate response to the attacks. The Commission is also mandated to provide recommendations designed to guard against future attacks” (Kean & Hamilton, 2004, para 1).

**Need to know:** “indicates that an individual requesting access to criminal intelligence data has the need to obtain the data in order to execute official responsibilities” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013, p. 46).

## **SUMMARY**

Communication among our country’s three levels of law enforcement has become a topic of study since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Growing concerns about barriers in our government’s communication skills are prevalent as different situations continue to threaten the nation’s safety. The intelligence community has often been criticized for miscommunication that could have potentially deterred the horrific attacks on American soil in 2001. The implementation of the 9/11 Commission Report and Fusion Centers across the country have provided guidelines and means to help bridge the gap in intelligence sharing between local, state, and federal levels of law enforcement, but most are still implemented through personal connections in the Southern State

Region.

The following chapter examines literature focusing on the changes before and after September 11, 2001, in the aspects of information and intelligence distribution between local, state, and federal levels of law enforcement, as well as the implementation of fusion centers and their effects on communication. Chapter three describes the methodological design of the study. The population sampling and data collection procedures are described, while also discussing the data analysis process and explaining how the research questions were answered. Chapter four analyzes the data obtained in the research. Finally, chapter five discusses future implications and research drawn from the research data and previous studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The lack of intelligence dissemination prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 forced the country to realize its shortcomings with sharing information among levels of law enforcement. Different agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), FBI, National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), etc., share the common goal of gathering information in order to reveal threats against the United States. In Nacos's (2016) book, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, one major flaw was presented in the fact these agencies all see fragments of information that do not show the overall situation, and if they collaborated the totality of the threat can potentially be seen (Nacos, 2016). The missed opportunity to prevent the 9/11 attacks from occurring was not based upon the lack of law enforcement knowledge but rather the bureaucratic rules that governed the dissemination of information among law enforcement agencies at different levels (German & Stanley, 2007; Nacos, 2016).

Throughout the country, many scholars and lawmakers have tried to address the problem of information sharing. Since September 11, 2001, the 9/11 Commission Report has been implemented in order to further information sharing across levels of law enforcement and regional fusion centers have been created to help facilitate this cooperation.

Information is defined as raw unanalyzed data that pertains to persons, events,



evidence, etc. on cases that are being investigated. This information can be gathered by numerous levels of law enforcement that then have to be shared amongst the organizations. Raw data can come from sources such as wiretaps, informants, interviews, banking records, criminal records, surveillance, etc. (Carter, 2004). These pieces of information are being shared across levels of law enforcement which aids in case completion.

Information can be sensitive and protected to different levels of classification. According to Quist (para 2 ,1993), “top secret” information applies to information that is expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to national security if inappropriately disclosed, which includes information such as intelligence operations, scientific developments towards national security, etc. “Secret” classification applies to information that can cause serious damage to national security, which includes indications of weaknesses in equipment or capabilities, etc. “Confidential” classification applies to information that can cause damage to national security, which includes technical information used for training, maintenance, and inspection (Quist, 1993). Finally, “law enforcement sensitive” classification applies to information that is sensitive but unclassified in which its disclosure could jeopardize law enforcement investigations (Hamilton, para 4, 2017). Information is classified in order to protect the people conducting the investigation, the methods in which they are gathered, and the information itself (Carter, 2004).

In addition to the policies and practices that the government has implemented through the 9/11 Commission Report and fusion centers, this study was guided by (a) the pre-9/11 shortcomings in information sharing; (b) the post-9/11 changes in information

sharing; (c) fusion center formation and its impact on intelligence sharing nationwide; and (d) the need for information sharing in order to ensure national security, how it is orchestrated, and challenges faced.

### **Pre-9/11 Shortcomings in Information Sharing**

Collaboration among levels of law enforcement before the 9/11 attacks made distinct separations between traditional crimes and counterterrorism crimes. This separation between crimes led to lack of communication among organizations who faced these offenses. According to Carter (2009), one of the main reasons information was not disseminated properly to every organization was the concern that critical information would fall into possession of the wrong individual. The potential misguidance of information could jeopardize cases as well as undercover officers, informants, and collection methods, which led to the reluctance to share information outside of one's agency. The process of "operations security" allowed for the possibility of organizations to possess overlapping information on individuals that were connected without the knowledge of the other's investigation.

September 11, 2001 was a watershed moment in American law enforcement history (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). The lack of communication between the federal government and lower levels of law enforcement became prevalent. The terrorists who orchestrated the attacks on 9/11 all had criminal records that had been intercepted by various law enforcement agencies. Records such as traffic violations and fraudulent driver's licenses brought the terrorists on law enforcement radar; however, without a formal information sharing process, the federal government was unaware of their criminal history before their attacks on that fatal day (Council of State, 2005). The federal

government's post-attack analysis determined that enough information was available from these criminal records to have detained the individuals before their attack on American soil (Dodson, 2007).

The shortcomings in intelligence sharing revealed by 9/11 terrorist attacks created the pathway to new techniques in intelligence collaboration and brought the country into its current information sharing focus. The September 11, 2001, attacks led the government to issue the 9/11 Commission Report and fusion centers to better facilitate communication between federal, state, and local levels of law enforcement and implement new procedures to help the process work more smoothly across all levels.

### **Post-9/11 Changes in Information Sharing**

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, changes began to occur throughout the intelligence and law enforcement communities to prevent these kind of attacks from reoccurring. The importance of intelligence gathering, analysis, and sharing tools improved after the terrorist attacks in order to further cooperation among all levels of law enforcement (Council of State, 2005). The 9/11 Commission Report was brought into effect on August 3, 2007 by President George W. Bush (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008). The 9/11 Commission Report recommended an information sharing environment between local, state, and federal levels and made numerous recommendations related to intelligence dispersal (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008; Carter, 2009).

Carter (2009) stated that the 9/11 Commission Report encouraged "cooperative relationships, integration of intelligence functions, and a general reengineering of the intelligence community were at the heart of their recommendations" (Carter, 2009, p. 43).

The sharing of information and working with organizations, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), should improve communication among local, state, and federal employees when working towards a common enemy from different criminal records (Carter, 2009). The 9/11 Commission Report recognized the heightened necessity and importance for infusing different levels of law enforcement such as seen in JTTFs and resulted in 66 JTTFs around the nation. The shift in focus seen with the heightened use of JTTFs throughout the country shows the FBI's transition from its majority concern for traditional crime to a reshaping of priorities to "protect the United States from terrorist attacks" (Council of State, 2005, p. 20). These shifts in the FBI are occurring throughout the United States in order to implement the newfound need to communicate among differing levels of law enforcement agencies.

Another advancement implemented after the 9/11 attacks was the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan (NCISP). The NCISP implemented in 2003 was designed to provide a method for forming well-established partnerships among the three levels of law enforcement in which actionable intelligence products could be created from. The NCISP highlighted the importance of sharing among these government agencies in order to prevent future terrorism and other criminal activity (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013). Within the guidelines of the NCISP, the fusion center idea was developed and funded in order to further the structure of communication and intelligence sharing (Dodson, 2007). After the implementation of government plans like the 9/11 Commission Report and NCISP, intelligence and information sharing throughout the country continued to increase and change with the creation of fusion centers.

## **Fusion Center Formation and Its Impact on Intelligence Sharing Nationwide**

According to the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*, a fusion center is defined as a:

collaborative effort of two or more federal, state, local, or tribal government agencies that combines resources, expertise, and information with the goal of maxing the ability of such agencies to detect, prevent, investigate, apprehend, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008, p. 4)

Fusion centers provide comprehensive and appropriate network access, data analysis, and information dissemination that is not seen in another single place (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017). Employees consist of local law enforcement and other local government employees, including the Department of Homeland Security personnel and the FBI. Multiple agency representation allows for easy collaboration on site (Kayyali, 2014).

After September 11, 2001, the need for better communication techniques throughout the government was largely put into focus. The FBI tried to increase their JTTF intelligence sharing but there was still something missing for the state and local levels in this federally-based government group. Beginning in 2003, fusion centers began to be implemented throughout the country in order to spread the communication of intelligence throughout the country (German & Stanley, 2007). State and local entities are responsible for establishing, managing, and controlling fusion centers which render the fusion centers susceptible to political and legal constraints inside each state's respective jurisdiction (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008).

The development of fusion centers across the nation is a direct result from needing improved, more unified information from all three levels of law enforcement that pertains to suspects, locations, and transportations that may be tied to criminal activities, such as terrorist attacks (Dodson, 2007). Fusion centers orchestrate the core function of collaboration and are an effective tool that maximizes relationship building and provides available resources from multiple agencies at once (Carter, 2009). As Secretary Michael Chertoff said in his address to the National Fusion Center Conference:

Ultimately, what we want to do is not create a single [fusion center], but a network of [centers] all across the country, a network which is visible not only to us at the federal level, but as important, if not more important visible to each of you working in your own communities so you can leverage all the information gathered across the country to help you carry out your very important objectives. (Rollins, 2008, p. 9)

Fusion centers are intended to fill the voids among local, state, and federal laws enforcement in an attempt to secure domestic cohesion and national security from all levels of law enforcement. They serve as a location in which both civilian and sworn personnel from a myriad of agencies at the three levels of law enforcement can interact with one another (Cozine et al., 2014).

There are many different examples of fusion centers. Arizona's Counter Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC) was one of the first fusion centers to be created after the attacks on September 11, 2001. ACTIC is nationally recognized for its ability to provide tactical and strategic intelligence to support state law enforcement offices and is located with the FBI's JTTF. The Upstate New York Regional Intelligence Center

(UNYRIC) is a multi-agency center that collects, analyzes, and disseminates intelligence to New York City and 54 surrounding counties. UNYRIC is comprised of people from many departments including the New York National Guard, The Office of Homeland Security, NY state police and etc. (Council of State, 2005). These two examples show that every fusion center does not have the same makeup, location, or purpose in order to ensure national security and enhance collaboration between all levels of law enforcement. Fusion centers were created to support and serve their local departments' needs in the area which gives them their purpose, rather than focusing on the federal or the Washington intelligence community (Jenkins, Liepman, & Willis, 2014).

One of the fusion centers' main roles is to contribute to government agencies and law enforcement departments in order to aid communication which make fusion centers vital to the American society. The presumptions that led these roles are: (a) intelligence and the process of intelligence are vital roles in preventing terrorist actions; (b) in order to create a comprehensive threat picture, fusion of a wider range of data is necessary; (c) local and state law enforcement are in a unique position that helps them make observations and collect information that could aid the main focus of threat assessments; and (d) sub-federal level actions help benefit state and local departments and can potentially aid national security (Rollins, 2008; Carter, 2009). Local police departments are better suited to collect certain types of domestic intelligence, such as the criminal records of the terrorists involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks. Local intelligence collection makes fusion centers necessary to aid the dissemination of local intelligence to their federal counterparts (Jenkins, Liepman, & Willis, 2014).

The creation of fusion centers has made the ideology of information sharing very

prominent in the three levels of law enforcement to prevent another terrorist attack on American soil. Information sharing take many forms which the next section of this chapter will discuss the methodologies used most frequently.

### **The Need for Information Sharing to Ensure National Security, How It is Orchestrated, and Challenges Faced**

Sharing information among the three levels of law enforcement is imperative in order to ensure the safety of the American public at all levels. The changes seen from before September 11, 2001, to after the attacks and the organization of regional fusion centers helps maintain the focus of information sharing. The practice of information sharing has changed in how it is viewed by government agencies and police departments in their willingness to share amongst themselves, but there are still many challenges in their collaboration.

One of the main features of information sharing that changed after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks was the change from “need to know” to “need/responsibility to share” (Rollins, 2008; Dodson, 2007). Before September 11, 2001, government agencies and police departments saw the action of sharing information as a potential detriment that could potentially compromise the safety of the information and the actual case it pertained to. Despite the change in philosophy, there is still a “need to know” influence on the dissemination of information to external agencies. Rules for dissemination of evidence are: (a) the protection of the civil rights of individuals, and (b) the preservation of operational security. In these instances, while most officers have the right to know information because of the status obtained through their job, not all officers have a “need to know” which is based on their direct involvement requiring this information (Carter,



2009, p. 69).

Information collaboration flows from many different agencies and departments in order to work effectively. Employees of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Sheriffs' Association, FBI, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and etc. are all part of the information sharing process that helps aid in the protection of America (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013, p. 6). Over sixty percent of agencies at the state level have local agencies request assistance in aiding their intelligence gathering process through high-tech/computer crime investigations and general training to help their intelligence processes in the future. FBI's JTTFs have helped build key relationships and have promoted intelligence sharing across jurisdictional boundaries (Council of State, 2005).

Three main types of information sharing occur through this intergovernmental process of fusion centers. Cross-domain information sharing focuses on the sharing of data between different clearances across different networks. Cross-organization information sharing focuses on providing inter-agency, sensitive and or classified data through different organizational systems. Disconnected information sharing concentrates on sharing sensitive and classified information to disconnect devices (Dodson, 2007). The National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) focuses on cross-domain intelligence sharing among different levels of law enforcement, whether local law enforcement or federal emergency service agencies, and brings together key domains and communities of interest between all levels (Carter, 2009).

Despite the attempts to aid information and intelligence sharing throughout the levels of law enforcement in the United States, challenges are often seen with this type of

dissemination. Being proactive, overstepping boundaries, and declassification plague the idea of intelligence dissemination between levels of law enforcement in the United States (Carter, 2009). Declassification is a serious problem with intelligence dissemination because of its long, tedious process which cannot be easily shortened and creates boundaries and detracts from the desired proactiveness.

Historically, law enforcement intelligence collection tends to be reactive side rather than a proactive tactic that prevents the criminal actions from being completed (Carter, 2009). According to local and state officials, the federal agencies still distribute information on a reactive response when it comes to their jurisdiction. Federal agencies are not proactive in initiating connections with fusion centers (Rollins, 2008). It is a challenge for the intelligence community to be fully proactive because of the unforeseeable actions of individuals that could potentially change the outcome.

Another overarching issue that plagues the intelligence community's collaboration is the potential overstepping of boundaries in the public's eye. German and Stanley's (2007) phrase it eloquently in stating that the government's actions to better information sharing is indeed needed after the September 11, 2001, attacks, but information about American citizens should be handled with the utmost care in order to keep non-threatening individuals off of the "suspicious" persons list for federal agencies (German & Stanley, 2007, p 3). With the collaboration of numerous organizations from every level of government, the fusion center's intelligence gathering processes are not under one set of rules. As a result, "policy shopping", or picking and choosing which set of laws individuals are under at the time of collection, plays a big role in fusion centers overstepping their boundaries (German & Stanley, 2007, p 10). The actions of fusion

centers is vital to protection, but the regulations for these centers need to be delineated in order to keep citizens safe from over collection and unnecessary intrusion.

One last formidable challenge with information sharing among the three different levels of law enforcement is the policy of classification and declassification. Most of the information obtained by the federal government is classified and unavailable to state and local officials because of their lack of security clearances. The federal government's process of declassifying information in order to disseminate it to local and state officers is something that is extremely difficult to achieve and takes a tremendous amount of time to complete. Most state and local department complain about receiving a "substantial amount of information", but none pertaining to the "right information" needed for their case (German & Stanley, 2007, p 20). The fragmentation of law enforcement in the United States has almost made it impossible to disseminate information among agencies in a timely manner. Each level of government can only operate with the "authority granted to them by their constituency" (Cozine, Joyal, & Ors, 2014, p. 119). Security clearances are difficult to obtain, but are necessary to keep information pertinent to the safety of the country, but the problems posed by the classification of information are prominent when trying to circulate information through the three levels of law enforcement.

## **SUMMARY**

Many changes have been realized since the September 11, 2001 attacks relating to information and intelligence sharing throughout the three levels of law enforcement. The creation of fusion centers has aided information sharing between different governmental agencies. Despite their many challenges, fusion centers' main focus is to provide a

consolidated facility for agencies and departments to collaborate on cases their organizations are working from different perspectives in pursuit of a total picture. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the government realized their mistake in not coordinating previous knowledge of the terrorists prior to the attacks. Both of the presented research questions focused on the changes in intelligence dissemination after September 11, 2001 and the gaps that remain in the dissemination of intelligence in the United States' law enforcement community.

Many academic articles have been published on the intelligence community and the problems faced before September 11, 2001 and how fusion centers have aided or hindered the process of collaboration (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013; Carter, 2009; Council of State, 2005; German, & Stanley, 2007; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008). Every respondent in the interview process had heard of and/or used the fusion center located in the Southern State Region and agree changes have been implemented throughout the intelligence community since the September 11, 2001, attacks. Their knowledge and firsthand interactions with other organizations were considered when answering the interview questions, however, personal recommendations or personal opinions on the intelligence process were omitted in order to focus on the actual process and not an individual's bias.

Interpersonal connections are a focal point in the dissemination of intelligence throughout the levels of law enforcement in the United States. Trust is one of the main considerations in whether or not information is distributed to another organization or not because the lack of trust jeopardizes the protection of information from external entities (Cozine et al., 2014). A formal policy, plan, and procedure is recommended by academic

articles in order to protect agencies and the information being transferred between organizations (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013).

Chapter Three provides an overview of the research design and methodology for the study. The methodological design of the study is explained in relation to the research questions. The sampling method and data collection methods described, as well as the data analysis tools used for the study. The fourth chapter examined the data gathered from the survey, analysis methods, and results of data analysis. Finally, the fifth chapter discussed the survey's findings, implications of the study, and future research about the topic.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Although there is a tremendous amount of research conducted on the effects September 11, 2001 had on communication techniques throughout the levels of law enforcement, the current knowledge on how communication has changed on a daily basis is still in its infancy. This study relied on the perceptions of local, state, and federal law enforcement officers who have disseminated intelligence among the agencies since September 11, 2001. This chapter specifically details the study's: (a) methodology, (b) population and sample, (c) data collection and instrumentation, and (d) data analysis.

The research questions that guided this study include:

- 1) How has intelligence dissemination among local, state, and federal law enforcement officers changed since September 11, 2001?
- 2) What impediments, if any, in intelligence dissemination are perceived by local, state, and federal law enforcement agents?

### **Population and Sample**

The present study used the transcripts of interview questions that provided a wide range of information pertaining to the intelligence dissemination process among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. The participants were selected by a non-probability, purposive sample. Non probability sampling is "any sampling procedure that violates the Equal Probability of Selection Method," meaning that every law enforcement

agent did not possess the same probability of being selected (Hagan, 2018, p. 103). The purposive sampling used in this study was the technique of snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is “the selection of the sample based on the researcher’s skill, judgment, and needs” (Hagan, 2018, p. 103). Snowball sampling “entails obtaining a first subject and on the basis of this subject obtains entrée and introduction to other subjects” (Hagan, 2018, p. 107). The original point of contact provided the information pertaining to another agent or officer that could provide firsthand experience and knowledge concerning the interview questions.

Participants for this study were selected based on their familiarization with the intelligence dissemination process amongst the three levels of law enforcement. Instead of taking any law enforcement agent at random, the participants chosen were individuals who have firsthand experience with the transaction of intelligence amongst different levels of law enforcement and have experienced the miscommunications and new implications placed on the distribution of intelligence. Those who were conveniently accessible and those who could reflect on and provide insight related to their understanding and involvement with intelligence dissemination were asked to participate.

A recruitment script was used to provide the participant with information about the interview process (Appendix A). The Script described the objective of the research, the need for verbal consent in order to participate, the need to record and take notes throughout the interview, and how long the interview would likely last. There was an opportunity for participants to ask questions and express concerns after the Script was read.

Once verbal consent was received, the participants scheduled a time that would

best fit their schedule for the interview to be conducted. The Institutional Review Board approved this study, in which, verbal consent allowed for the interview, in some cases, to be recorded for further documentation later, as well as, acknowledging their ability to withdraw from the interview at any point in time.

In qualitative research, the sample size has no clear requirement (Hagan, 2018). When needing information on three different levels of law enforcement, participants from each level were needed to draw conclusive information from and to further research and implications.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Data collection was conducted through unstructured, face-to-face interviews from an interview schedule that consisted of open-ended questions pertaining to local law enforcement agencies (See Appendix B) and questions pertaining to state and federal agencies (See Appendix C). Each level received the same general questions concerning their particular involvement to facilitate comparisons across interviews (Hagan, 2018). The interview guide was designed from academic research and the researcher's prior knowledge on the subject. Face-to-face interviews allowed the participants to provide open-ended responses and the opportunity for clarification or expansion while the interview took place (Hagan, 2018).

The interview schedule contained questions such as, "What current process is used to share intelligence between police departments and federal agencies in Northern MS?" In addition, participants were asked questions pertaining to the common communication obstacles seen amongst the three levels of law enforcement. For instance, they were asked, "Are there conditions where agencies aren't allowed to share



intelligence information?” The relatively unstructured, open-ended, face-to-face interview offered flexibility in language that potentially increased the quality and length of the responses.

Each participant was interviewed individually in a private area in order to maintain confidentiality and were not under influence of other employees. Interviews were digitally recorded with the interviewee’s permission and then transcribed by the researcher. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Each interview was transcribed by using a semi-strict verbatim style (Typing Services, 2015), where each and every word of the participants, including all the fillers (ums, you knows), were included on the transcript. Similarly, participants’ grammatical errors and misused or mispronounced words were not corrected. Unlike strict verbatim transcriptions, background noises (doors opening/closing, intercom messages) and non-verbal communication (sighs, laughter, coughs) were not recorded on the transcripts. Proper nouns were omitted and a generic description of the identifier was placed inside square brackets. For example, if a participant used a particular area in which they were employed, the officer’s response would appear on the transcript as, “The federal government is a tremendous help to the [name of police department].” An additional attempt to validate the transcripts was made by listening to the digital recording a second time, while reading the finished transcript. Any errors were corrected.

### **Data Analysis**

Collection and analysis of the qualitative data occurs simultaneously. As identified by Merriam (1998), coding occurs at two levels: “identifying information about the data and interpretive constructs related to analysis” (p. 164). For example, each

interview included identifying notations so that they could be referenced during the analysis process.

A phenomenological analysis strategy was used to aid the researcher in understanding the participants' responses. The first specific technique of a phenomenological analysis strategy was accomplished through "epoche" (Creswell, 2003, p. 52), the Greek word meaning to "refrain from judgment" (Patton, 1990, p.484). Merriam (1998) described "epoche" as the process that a researcher employs to try to view the "phenomenon from several different angles or perspectives" (p. 158).

"Bracketing" (Merriam, 1998, p. 158) or "brackets out" (Patton, 1990, p. 485) is the second specific technique used to analyze the participants' experiences. This analytical process, according to Patton (1990), is a term coined by Husserl in 1913 that "brackets out the world and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions" (p. 485).

Once the data was bracketed, Creswell (2003) suggested the next step of dividing the collected data in the analysis. Data with equal value were divided into statements. That is, the data was "horizontalized" (Patton, 1990, p. 486) for examination. The data was transformed into "clusters of meanings", as expressed in phenomenological concepts, or "codes" (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1998, p. 253). From the various clusters or codes, the researcher was able to view the participants' perceptions from differing lenses or themes.

The subsequent step in the phenomenological analysis involved connecting the various themes to arrive at a general description of the experience. The descriptions are presented in both textural and structural approaches. Patton (1990) explained that textural

descriptions were the participants' perceptions or an "abstraction of the experience that provides content and illustration, but not yet essence" (p. 486). Conversely, structural descriptions explain the real meaning of the experience or the "deeper meanings for the individuals who, together, make up the group" (Patton, 1990, p. 486). Finally, the phenomenological analysis concluded with a synthesis of the texture and structure, "recognizing that a single unifying meaning of the experience exists" (Creswell, 1998, p. 55).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine how intelligence is gathered in the Southern State Region, discover the perceived gaps in the current policies used with this communication, and provide potential solutions to intelligence communication problems. The study's population was chosen through techniques such as non-probability sampling, purposive sampling, and snowballing. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews, in which member checking was used in order to find participants. The study utilized interviews of local police officers, state Fusion center employees, and federal agents throughout the Southern State Region. Through interviews of participants, qualitative data was collected and was then transcribed through a semi-strict verbatim style format. The data was then analyzed to find recurring themes in which the study was used.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**ANALYSIS OF DATA**  
**INTRODUCTION**

Significant amount research has been conducted regarding the miscommunications among the local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies prior to September 11, 2001, (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013; Carter, 2009; Rollins, 2008), and has continued to identify challenges posed with this dissemination after the terrorist attacks (German & Stanley, 2007; Cozine et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008). The purpose of this study was to examine how intelligence is gathered in the Southern State Region, discover real or perceived gaps in the current policies regulating intelligence sharing communication and provide potential solutions to intelligence communication problems.

**ORGANIZATION OF DATA ANALYSIS**

To examine the current practices used to disseminate intelligence among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with Southern State Region law enforcement officers. Transcripts from interviews were gleaned to specifically examine the agency or department's current structure of intelligence distribution. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How has intelligence dissemination among local, state, and federal law enforcement officers changed since September 11, 2001?

- 2) What impediments, if any, in intelligence dissemination are perceived by local, state, and federal law enforcement agents?

Through the process of content analysis, specifically, unrestricted coding, or “open coding” (Strauss, 1990), the researcher sought to identify patterns, themes, and common categories. The researcher thoroughly read through each transcript, line-by-line and word-by-word, in order to establish significant patterns.

### **PRESENTATION OF DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

The demographics of the six participants are reported in Table 1. Six participants were used for this study because of the close geographic proximity to the researcher, ease of access, and willingness to provide enough information. The researcher began the selection process by contacting one individual who then began the snowball sampling process used throughout the study. Ten potential participants were recommended through snowball sampling. Only six were conveniently available or able to provide adequate responses to question. The names used in the table represent pseudonyms assigned to each participant to maintain anonymity.

Among the participants, half (n=3) were employed at the local level. The remaining three represented the state (n=1) or federal levels (n=2). Among the participants represented, a police officer, police captain, police investigator, director of state analysis and information center, FBI analyst, and Department of Justice analyst were all represented.

Table I

*Interview Participants*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Level of Government</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
<b>John</b>	Local	Police Officer
<b>Charles</b>	Local	Police Captain
<b>Nicholas</b>	Local	Police Investigator
<b>Jessica</b>	State	State Analysis and Information Center
<b>Heather</b>	Federal	FBI
<b>Patrick</b>	Federal	Department of Justice Intelligence Analyst

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

The two research questions and their corresponding findings are presented concurrently to facilitate comprehension. As previously stated, both research questions generated qualitative data. The transcriptions of the interviews were used by the researcher to draw conclusions.

***Research Question 1:*** *How has intelligence dissemination among local, state, and federal law enforcement officers changed since September 11, 2001?*

The first major theme that emerged was that intelligence dissemination has changed since the attack on September 11, 2001. However, these changes have not resolved problems that many agencies face when sharing intelligence outside of their department.

One of the questions asked to the local level participants was, “What current process is used to share intelligence between police departments and federal agencies in the [Southern State Region]?, which was consistent with the state and federal question of, “How do you currently share intelligence?” The answers to these questions indicated that the current processes implemented amongst these departments has changed over the past decade. According to the participants, intelligence dissemination prior to September 11, 2001, was restricted and many organizations were skeptical of its importance. This speculation is shown with the creation of federal programs that promote intelligence communication among all levels. One example of change seen since September 11, 2001, was Heather stated:

One way the FBI now tries to contribute communication and skills to the public and local or state police officers is provide training through our Citizen’s Academy and Leaders of the Community programs. They try to incorporate communication skills as well as making connections between agencies and departments.

Another example is at the local level, Nicholas proclaimed, “Yeah so now when we need information on a case, we go to the Fusion Center to get them to run things like license plates and such through their databases.” Jessica stated, “Before 9/11, fusion centers didn’t even exist so their existence shows a major change in policy about communication from the government.”

The first major theme yielded two minor themes related to the first research question: (a) the use of personal connections as the main source of intelligence dissemination and (b) the willingness of the federal government to aid local and state law

enforcement departments.

The first minor theme identified during the interview process was the practice of using personal communications to disseminate information among levels of law enforcement. All six interview participants stated they most often used personal connections to share information with agents outside of their own frequently through email and phone calls. One participant, Nicholas stated, “For [County] police department, mostly phone calls and emails are made through our own connections to different departments located near here, you know.” Another participant, Patrick, said, “My office uses email almost exclusively...where it comes in as PDF or Excel, depending on current case and department we get the information from.”

Many participants noted the database, National Crime Information Center (NCIC), when discussing techniques used to disseminate information outside of their specific office. NCIC is often used according to all participants but the preferred form of communication is personal connections through email and phone calls. One participant, John, explained:

If nothing jumps off of NCIC or there's not anything on their triple "I"...if there's nothing on them and I still think they're up to no good, my best point is tag numbers, information from everyone in the car, and then make phone calls either after the stop or the next day. And sometimes like right now, you know all of your federal agents are out. So if I thought it was a narcotics issue, then I might call DEA or [state drug agency] because they all dip into the same database pretty much. But, they all have a different clearance. So, if you want something good, you really need to have



relationships with someone who can pull it for you.

According to all participants, personal communications is often the easiest process to gain information because of the quick turnaround needed with many law enforcement stops. For example, John stated:

Our best resource is to have a connection with a local agent. So if I feel like someone is doing something that is big time, I will just call a buddy at the FBI and say hey what are your thoughts on this. And then let them run their checks.

In addition, Heather acknowledged, “Most of what happens in our office is phone calls from local and state departments about cases in the area that may coincide with us.”

Similarly, Jessica said, “We don’t necessarily get lots of phone calls here but we get emails to our analysts who then run it through our programs.”

The second minor theme presented was the willingness of the federal government to aid in the local and state criminal cases when asked. Many participants stated that the federal government was more than willing to help whenever asked by requested a local or state level law enforcement department. For example, Heather stated, “Most definitely. The headquarters recommends, uh, our communication with other, uh, agencies and law enforcement. This is a very big thing from headquarters. It is extremely encouraged.” Another participant, Charles, explained, “The feds are real good at moving information in order to help solve our cases. The state, not so much. Feds help whenever they’re needed.”

Since the federal levels are willing to help, two main areas are used in order to aid local and state law enforcement officers in the forms of: (a) fusion centers and (b) task

forces. Jessica described fusion centers' makeup as:

Well here in [the Southern State Region], the fusion centers [have] individuals from all three levels of law enforcement. We have multiple local police departments, there is a Capitol police, FBI analyst, Homeland Security investigator, TSA agent, department of health agent, Attorney General's representative, etc. all working together in the same office in order to better communicate information to the requests coming in here.

The communication between levels of law enforcement not only occurs through state affiliation, but includes the federal level. For example, Heather stated, "Most intelligence sharing is done through our JTTFs which are made up of police departments that work with our federal agents."

*Research Question 2: What impediments, if any, in intelligence dissemination are perceived by local, state, and federal law enforcement agents?*

According to the findings, miscommunications exist among the three levels of law enforcement. The themes that emerged in this regard include (a) many law enforcement departments are overwhelmed with information and are unfamiliar with the resources through the fusion center; (b) different systems used throughout law enforcement departments cause a technological issue; and (c) the slow process of declassification and a "need to know" hinder the communication process.

### **Many Law Enforcement Departments are overwhelmed with Information and Lack Knowledge of Available Resources**

According to participants, the overwhelming amount of information law enforcement agencies possess hinders intelligence dissemination. Heather stated, "Many

agencies are swamped with information that takes a while to process. This hinders the sharing process outside their organization.”

As a result of the information overload, many departments are unaware of assistance from fusion centers in their area. The knowledge of the fusion centers in the Southern State Region are not widely publicized. Jenny stated:

Yes, there are many issues with departments in our region not realizing our existence. Since the [Southern State Region] is such a rural area, many local departments, for sure, don’t really know that a fusion center exists in their own state. Therefore, the resources we can, uh, provide them is often not used.

### **Different Systems used throughout Law Enforcement Departments cause a Technological Issue**

Most participants explained technological issues were present in the Southern State Region. The majority of participants stated that most law enforcement departments use different technological databases. Patrick stated,

The technological issues we tend to run into is the fact that many databases aren’t the same between departments. Then there’s the issue of large files being transferred that are hard to download or to encrypt in order to email to another individual. Yea, and then encryption has gotten huge, so that takes a whole ‘nother process of sending information.

In addition, John revealed the following about the local level:

Local law enforcement, outside of your county, it is very rare to have the same computer system. So we go to [county], they have a different

computer system. And that's where the federal government has an up on local law enforcement. All of the DEA will bleed into this one system, this one server. All of the FBI will have one. And the ATF the same. Ours, however, will not unless it's the same company. So it's a money making issues where our system may cost too much for [county] PD who has 5 officers. [County] can afford something that we can't.

Re-emphasizing this fact, Charles also stated, "There are many different databases over our area of [Southern State Region] which causes lots of issues."

### **Slow Process of Declassification and "Need-to-Know" hinder Communication Process**

The participants noted the burden of declassification and the policy of "need to know" among law enforcement levels. When information is disseminated from the federal level to the state level, there is a requirement for declassification of documents with "secret" or "top secret" classifications. For example, the federal level was asked, "Are there conditions where agencies aren't allowed to share intelligence information? (ex: sensitive trial, etc.)," Heather answered, "There are cases where declassification comes into play. This happens fairly often and it, um, takes a while for things to be declassified."

Most participants identified problems associated with the "need to know" policy, where information cannot be passed to another agency without an actual need for the information. In that regard, Jessica stated, "There are instances where we have to run case numbers in our systems, but aren't given the reason why or what for cause we don't have a need to know for that information."

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, the demographics of the six participants were reported. The findings of the qualitative study were also reported by presenting the responses related to each research question.

The first major theme, relating to the first research question, stated that intelligence dissemination has changed since the attack on September 11, 2001. Two minor themes were identified related to the research question. These minor themes were (a) the idea of using personal communications amongst levels of law enforcement in order to disseminate information and (b) the willingness of the federal government to aid in local and state criminal cases whenever they are asked.

Responses to the second research question revealed that there are communication problems associated with the dissemination of intelligence among the three levels of law enforcement. The minor themes that emerged were (a) many law enforcement departments are overwhelmed with information and are unaware of the resources available through the fusion center, (b) different systems used throughout law enforcement departments cause a technological issue, and (c) the slow process of declassification and a “need to know” hinder the communication process.

In Chapter Five, the conclusions drawn from the preceding findings are presented. The discussion of these conclusions will include a comparison of how these findings compare to previous studies. After the conclusions are presented, the implications for future research and practice will be detailed.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**  
**INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions drawn from the findings detailed in the previous chapter. Initially, the conclusions will be discussed relative to the existing research presented in Chapter Two. Implications for future research will be detailed as well as implications for future practice. Finally, a summary of the chapter will be provided.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Drawing from previous research related to intelligence dissemination surrounding September 11, 2001, there was an obvious lack of communication amongst the three levels of law enforcement that contributed to the September 11 attacks (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013; Carter, 2009; Dodson, 2007; German, & Stanley, 2007; Rollins, 2008; Council of State, 2005). Previous research has also shown that the implementation of fusion centers and widespread use of personal connections between organizations have been transformed in order to better communication among law enforcement levels in the future (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013; Carter, 2009; Cozine et al., 2014; Jenkins, Liepman, Willis, 2014; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008).

Fusion centers embody the process of intelligence communication among the three levels of law enforcement. Overwhelmingly, studies have found that fusion centers provided a specific location for each actor to communicate intelligence outside of their

particular office (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008). Past research has also specifically shown there are still actions needed to better implement intelligence dissemination throughout law enforcement (German, M., & Stanley, J; Jenkins, B. M., Liepman, A., & Willis, H. H., 2014; Rollins, J., 2008).

The findings from the current study are consistent with prior research in several ways. First, the present need for intelligence communication among the three levels of law enforcement remains critical. Every participant stated that communication outside of their particular agency was critical to their daily work. The first major theme detailed in the findings was that participants had a varied perception on how intelligence dissemination has been recommended and to what extent in recent years. According to Carter's (2009) article, in the fifteen years since the September 11, 2001 attack, the government encouraged cooperative relationships among levels of law enforcement. However, according to German and Stanley's (2007) article, intelligence sharing is indeed needed as long as its implementation does not impose on the citizen's rights and information is handled with the utmost care. There are still gaps in intelligence dissemination that need to be addressed.

The current study supports assertions made by Carter (2009) and German and Stanley (2007). Many of the interview participants stated the overall need to communicate intelligence outside of their agency has increased. The first and second major themes applicably supported the first research question because they identified two aspects in which communication is accomplished. The first exemplifies the communication aspect of personal connections amongst different agencies and levels of

law enforcement through the situations described by Nicholas with personal phone calls and Patrick with emails. The second discusses the willingness of the federal level to communicate intelligence to state and local law enforcement departments through Heather and Charles's responses about the federal level encouraging them to communicate with other organizations. Participants who used personal connections in order to disseminate intelligence stated that it was the easiest way to broadcast information to outside agencies. Participants who did not utilize personal connections, but opted to use request forms, failed to realize the rapid response that personal connections provide. Personal connections and government willingness allows for better intelligence communication by promoting communication outside their specific organization.

Themes three, four and five exemplified German and Stanley's (2007) proposal for further intelligence dissemination. The third theme indicates the overwhelming amount of information local law enforcement departments receive and cannot maintain. The local departments lack knowledge of fusion center resources that could potentially help them discover pertinent information. This was evident throughout the interviews from all levels of law enforcement: (a) Heather at the federal level stating that local counterparts were not able to disseminate information efficiently with the overwhelming amount they possessed, and (b) Jenny at state level stating the local's lack of knowledge of their fusion center capabilities. The knowledge of fusion center capabilities to aid intelligence dissemination and resource opportunities is very unknown through the information obtained in the interviews.



This lack of communication was also evident in the fourth theme's implication of technological issues between law enforcement databases. The local law enforcement databases in the Southern State Region vary among counties and the communications amongst departments are often delayed. According to Cozine, Joyal, and Ors (2014), fusion centers were designed and implemented to mend the gap among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies as well as those on the same governmental level. Therefore, knowledge of the fusion center throughout the state should aid intelligence dissemination.

The fifth theme revealed that there is a slow declassification process and a "need to know" when it comes to the intelligence sharing while protecting citizen's rights and the integrity of the information. Several participants mentioned the declassification process and the "need to know" as an impediment to sharing intelligence. According to Rollins (2008), there are many complexities when it comes to the declassification process or when information is "over-classified" in order to protect the information. Unfortunately, it hinders the information from reaching appropriate personnel working outside of the agency. Many participants expounded upon these implications. Heather stated declassification often takes a while to complete and is a problem with many cases. While Jessica stated "need to know" is often seen in her work when she runs information on an individual without given the full context of the case.

The findings from this study indicate that intelligence dissemination among the three levels of law enforcement is remains critical, but improvements are still needed. Specifically, intelligence dissemination has become a tremendous aspect of the

participant's daily activities. The law enforcement community's encouragement for communication among all levels of law enforcement continues to be a focal point in each organization. While supporting the existing literature, these findings also provide implications for future research and practice.

### **Implications for Future Research**

There are several ways in which future research could improve upon and expand the current study. One method used for ensuring validity in qualitative research is known as member

checking. Member checking is when, "the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Lincoln and Guba (1985)

refer to member checking as "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). While member checking was done to an extent in this study, with the constraints of the available participants, more qualified members could have potentially been available. Another strategy for ensuring validity is by using triangulation. Triangulation is when, "researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Future research of the intelligence dissemination process between the three levels of law enforcement could employ a national focus group participants to review their initial analyses on intelligence dissemination across law enforcement levels and provide suggestions on what is lacking or future recommendations.

Although much of past research into intelligence dissemination among levels of

law enforcement has been qualitative in a sense, these studies do not contribute a wide-range of perspectives on the topic. The use of surveys could broaden the scope.

Triangulating methods would allow for the findings from each method to support one another and would strengthen any findings from the study.

One topic in the current study that needs further analysis is the reasoning behind the difficulty of dissemination intelligence. After years of trying to make communication a focal point of the law enforcement intelligence community, there has to be a reason why barriers still exist when some obstacles have been identified. Recommendations to better communication are seen in past research (Carter, 2009; German & Stanley, 2007; Rollins, 2008), but no reasonable explanation for communication hardships was articulated nor was an actionable plan proposed.

Last, additional studies need to be conducted. A study consisting of a larger sample size should be implemented to acquire numerous perspectives. A larger sample increased the potential to reach employees from other levels of law enforcement thus potentially broadening the information. The larger sample size helps promote generalizability. Another recommendation for future studies is a replication of the current study throughout other regions of the country. Incorporating other regions allow for comparisons from other regions to the Southern State Region, as well as allowing for new themes to emerge.

### **Implications for Practice**

In addition to the implications for future research, practical implications can be

drawn from the current study. The first implication is related to the personal connections. A keyword database should be created for each classification level. If a database of case information were kept, such as name, telephone numbers, identifying factors such as eye color or hair color, height, age, case agent, gang affiliation, etc., then this data could be examined by all employees in the agency and even future employees. An interagency database would bring together law enforcement departments from the three levels of law enforcement and help modify the intelligence sharing process (Carter, 2009). Since September 11, 2001, communications between agencies has increased and is encouraged but no one has created a calculated system to keep communications current and withstand organizational changes. This data could provide the agency with greater outside connections and there would potentially never be a lull in intelligence sharing. Creating this database will not be easy, but it could provide the agents better access to external employees who potentially have knowledge of their subject.

Another implication that could aid intelligence communication is a federal open house. At this open house, local and state law enforcement officers would be invited into the federal agency in order to begin communication and connection-making. The federal level could provide the local and state level with an understanding of their capabilities and resources while explaining their ways of aiding in the future. The local and state level could then realize the federal's capabilities and would know for future reference on upcoming cases. Also, connections among the levels could be built as interactions are made in this open house. The open house allows for easy communication because all levels are present.

The local level's lack of knowledge of fusion centers is a problem with intelligence dissemination. If knowledge of fusion centers' capabilities were known, then future intelligence dissemination would exceed current standings through the aspect of a centralized organization. The betterment of publicization of fusion centers is key to centralizing the intelligence communication. Local level's use of fusion centers can help the increase in communication among levels of law enforcement. Therefore, fusion centers need to send out publications of their existence, information, and capabilities to organizations in their region to ensure they have knowledge of their existence. This can be achieved through emails, phone calls, visits to the local departments, participating in police chief conferences, flyers, and expanding fusion center employee opportunities to all local departments.

### **Summary**

The problem addressed in this study was the changes in intelligence dissemination since September 11, 2001, how effective it has been, and what gaps are still in effect. The review of literature showed that there have been numerous laws put into effect since September 11, 2001, such as the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan or the 9/11 Commission Report. The research also provided that despite the critical focus on intelligence dissemination there are still numerous situations in which intelligence dissemination is faltering. This evidence was mainly presented through qualitative studies which used personal statements from individuals involved in organizations at the federal level of law enforcement and governmental leaders. These studies did not provide many insights into the local or state level individuals who are affected by the communication

change at a different angle.

The purpose of this study is to examine how intelligence is gathered in the Southern State Region, discover the perceived gaps in the current policies and practices used with this communication and provide potential solutions to intelligence communication. Through interviews, local, state, and federal law enforcement employees provided information on current communication techniques such as personal connections through phone calls or emails and explained the benefits of fusion centers in improving connections. The study discovered barriers in lack of awareness of fusion centers, different databases used in the local level, and the slow process of declassification or hindrance of “need to know.”

The problem of fusion center awareness throughout the Southern State Region still exists to an extent, but is being dealt with under new supervision through community outreach and attending programs such as the Chiefs of Police. Databases throughout the region are different because of the varying amount of resources departments have to spend on their systems. Bigger towns have a larger budget to buy a nicer database rather than the tiny towns throughout the region that do not have the same budget. This problem will not be solved until databases are not priced drastically different or a law goes into effect to mandate a unified system throughout the region. Declassification and “need to know” are issues that could potentially be permanent problems with intelligence dissemination. The protection of intelligence is mandatory, therefore validating these two problems.

The findings from the present study indicate that intelligence dissemination has

improved and will continued to improve in the future with the use of personal communications. There are still obstacles to be changed in order to continue improving communication, but intelligence dissemination has made progress since September 11, 2001.

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**APPENDIX A**

**RECRUITMENT SCRIPT**

Thank you for allowing me to briefly speak to you during your working hours. I am a student at the University of Mississippi and would like your assistance with a research project regarding intelligence dissemination amongst local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and what gaps, if any, are seen in this process. My objective is to learn how the September 11, 2001 attacks changed communication techniques amongst these three levels of law enforcement and if the changes have been successful in helping intelligence dissemination.

Your participation in an interview is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate we ask you to give verbal consent. Then, we will set up a time to conduct the interview that is convenient to your working schedule. I will record and take notes during the interview under your discretion. Finally, the information obtained through the interview will be transcribed in order to analyze and conduct further research.

Your participation in the interview will be completely anonymous outside myself and my thesis advisor. Only the information given will be presented in the research. It should take about 30 minutes to complete the interview. There is no direct benefit for you participating. However, important information from this interview could potentially benefit future intelligence dissemination in North Mississippi.

Do you have any questions?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **LOCAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What current process is used to share intelligence between police departments and federal agencies in Northern MS?
2. Are there gaps you have seen in intelligence sharing?
3. Do you have an assigned person to coordinate information sharing with other police departments or federal agencies that work in Northern MS?
4. Does lack money and personnel hinder the process of sharing intelligence with law enforcement?
5. Has information from federal agencies helped solve previous cases?
6. How does this department receive intelligence from federal agencies located in Northern MS?
7. Is there a shared database that local law enforcement can see information on or add information to?
8. How often is this database used in this department to solve cases?
9. How accessible are these databases to this department?
10. Has data you provided to these databases helped other police departments solve cases?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **STATE AND FEDERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Who does intelligence for North MS law enforcement community?
2. How do you currently share intelligence?
3. Who do you coordinate intelligence with currently?
4. Is there a formal process used to share intelligence or is it simply knowing people and sharing information?
5. Are there gaps that you've seen in intelligence sharing?
6. How do you work with local law enforcement?
7. Does lack money and personnel hinder the process of sharing intelligence with law enforcement?
8. How do you receive intelligence from local law enforcement?
9. Do national agencies support the sharing of intelligence locally?
10. If so, do national agencies provide resources to help sharing intelligence locally?
11. Are there conditions where agencies aren't allowed to share intelligence information? (ex: sensitive trial, etc.)
12. Are there any shared databases between federal agencies?
13. Is there a shared database that local law enforcement can add information to?
14. Is there a shared database that local law enforcement can see information on?
15. Are there problems with coordinating databases between agencies?

